



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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November 3, 2015

The Honorable Tom Casperson
Chairman, Transportation Committee
Michigan Senate
705 Farnum Building
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

RE: House Bill 4727 – Meteorological Evaluation Tower Marking and Registration

Dear Chairman Casperson:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), a not-for-profit membership organization, is the world's largest aviation organization, representing the interests of general aviation aircraft owners and operators – including over 12,000 in Michigan. On behalf of our members, we write to express our strong support for Michigan House Bill 4727 which will greatly increase the safe operation of Michigan's general aviation aircraft fleet.

Currently, Michigan's Department of Transportation Bureau of Aeronautics (MDOT) in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulates tall structures that may impact navigable airspace above Michigan. Generally, MDOT and the FAA only examine tall structures that exceed 200 feet in height or are located within the vicinity of a publicly-owned airport.

However, a recent increase in the construction of meteorological evaluation towers (METs) has raised significant substantiated safety concerns for the general aviation community in Michigan. Since many METs fall just below the existing tower marking and registration requirement at 199 feet in height, are gray in color, and unregistered with either the State or FAA, low-flying aircraft are unable to see and avoid these invisible hazards – a situation that has caused fatal aircraft accidents in states like Texas, California, and Oregon and prompted the National Transportation Safety Board to issue an Aviation Safety Alert to pilots and urged policymakers to require MET marking and registration.

House Bill 4727 would address these safety concerns by requiring newly constructed METs to be painted in a highly visible manner and registered in a database available to pilots to review as part of an existing preflight safety checklist. Marking and registration of METs would insert an additional level of safety for agricultural operators, airborne law enforcement and medical evacuation, aerial surveyors and other operators of both fixed wing aircraft and rotorcraft that make up the \$4.1 billion general aviation industry in Michigan.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We urge you to support House Bill 4727 and protect the continued safe and efficient operation of general aviation aircraft in Michigan. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 301-695-2095 or bryan.budds@aopa.org

Very truly yours,

Bryan Budds
Great Lakes Regional Manager

cc: Michigan Senate Transportation Committee
Representative Triston Cole